(a father is) a knife that never stops cutting

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(a father is) a knife that never stops cutting

by v10l3t_jpg

Summary

"Do you want me to get tampons as well?" Will asks, and it's out of genuine care but she flinches anyway. "Sorry, I'm not… trying to make this awkward."

"No, no, it's not you, it's just…" she tails off, brow furrowing as she turns her face away to stare at the floor. Her arms come up to cross over her chest like a barricade.

She takes a deep breath and continues in a small, embarrassed voice, face contorting in disgust as she tries to dislodge the words from her throat. "Once I left my jacket in the bathroom and when I went back to get it, my dad was sucking the period blood out of the tampon I'd just put in the trash."

Abigail gets her period at Will's place and discovers what a father should be. Amidst ice cream and a movie, she also discovers how a mother's absence leaves a gaping hole that can never quite be filled.

Notes

One quite graphic and disgusting description of canon-typical Garrett Jacob Hobbs' cannibalistic and incestuous tendencies, as seen in the description, but the rest of the fic is largely hurt/comfort, fluff, and father-daughter bonding.

"Are you alright?" Will asks the second Abigail's boots cross the threshold of the house, eyeing her in concern.

"Yeah," she lies, light-headed, mouth stretched into what she hopes is a convincing smile. "Why?"

"You look like death warmed up." Will furrows his brow, striding over to press the back of his hand to her forehead. "Sure you're feeling ok?"

"Yeah." she smiles, trying to sound reassuringly nonchalant against the sudden urge to pee.

By the time she makes it to the bathroom, there's a spot of violently red blood already staining her underwear. Fuck. No wonder she was so weepy yesterday.

She knows she has nothing with her, the inner pockets of her bag unstocked from last time. A quick raid of Will's bathroom drawers and cabinets comes up empty. *Fuck.*

She thuds back down the stairs, trying to adjust her posture to combat the too-slick feeling between her legs. "I'm just going to run to the store, need anything?"

"No, I'm good… you alright? What are you going for?" Will lifts his broad hand from Zoe's head and checks his watch with a frown.

"Girl stuff." Abigail screws her face up apologetically, part subject matter, part squeezing pain burrowing between her hips.

"Oh, period?"

She huffs a nervous laugh, caught off guard by his nonchalance. "Yeah."

He clocks the look of confusion on her face and laughs softly. "I've had girlfriends before, I've *met* an adult woman. Even recluses with seven dogs know about these things, Abigail.

Oh. Yeah.

"Here," he shifts forward, Zoe hopping down from the sofa to look up at him, her little fluffy white body buzzing with canine excitement. "Come sit down, I'll go get it."

"I'm fine, honestly, I'll be quick."

"You're white as a sheet, I don't trust you to drive like that."

"I drove here." she argues, making no effort to hide the prickling irritation creeping up her chest and into her voice, short nails biting into her palms.

"Abigail." he says firmly, blue eyes steely and intense where they meet hers. "Tell me what you need and I'll go get it."

She stares him down for a moment, her teenage need for independence versus Will's fierce protective drive.

"Pads." she says eventually, once it becomes clear that they're both too hard-headed and if she doesn't concede, she'll be here all night bleeding through her pants. "Night time ones."

"Need Advil?" He raises his brow, forehead creasing fatherly under his curls as he reaches for his sage green jacket.

"Please."

"Do you want me to get tampons as well?" Will asks, and it's out of genuine care but she flinches anyway. "Sorry, I'm not… trying to make this awkward."

"No, no, it's not you, it's just…" she tails off, brow furrowing as she turns her face away to stare at the floor. Her arms come up to cross over her chest like a barricade.

She takes a deep breath and continues in a small, embarrassed voice, face contorting in disgust as she tries to dislodge the words from her throat. "Once I left my jacket in the bathroom and when I went back to get it, my dad was sucking the period blood out of the tampon I'd just put in the trash."

Still avoiding his eyes, Abigail manages an uncomfortable half-hearted smile around a mouthful of bile.

Will's shoulders tense, jaw tightening. She adjusts her stance, wide eyed and ready to run as though he's a stag about to charge her. Instead he just grinds his teeth, blinking rapidly as his hands curl themselves into trembling fists.

His eyes look wounded when they meet hers – hurt *for* her, not by her. Then, in the voice of someone who no longer feels a shred of guilt for killing Garrett Jacob Hobbs, Will says "Sit tight. I'll be back soon."

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He comes back with a shopping bag stuffed until its flimsy plastic sides are strained.

He shoots her a half-smile as he pauses to hang his jacket by the door, and she trots uncomfortably after him to the kitchen where he begins unpacking on the counter – several packs of night time pads, Advil, Ben and Jerry's.

"You got the good shit." Abigail says approvingly as she turns the freezing tub over in her hands. "Hannibal would be impressed."

"No, he wouldn't," Will flashes his teeth conspiratorially, as if this is their little secret, like Abigail and Hannibal and Nick Boyle's gutted body. "It's got artificial preservatives."

She laughs at that, suddenly missing Hannibal. She hopes he isn't lonely, rattling around the house by himself, or resenting her for keeping Will from him. Realistically, she tries to reassure herself, he's probably sketching in the office with a glass of wine for company. She keeps forgetting that he's not like her dad, that she doesn't need to be afraid of him.

Will hands her a pack of pads with an anxious smile, which she returns with a soft *thanks* and disappears to the bathroom.

She returns in pyjamas, a little colour back in her cheeks. Will nudges a generous bowl of ice cream towards her – it's the peanut butter one anyway but he's studded extra peanut butter cups over the top.

She wonders why he always looks like a nervous puppy when he offers her something, like he's afraid that she'll reject it, tell him he's a bad dog.

Since the encephalitis incident, she'll sometimes hear him reminding himself of the time, of where he is, and it makes something ache in her chest. They're just two people whose lives haven't gone according to plan (*their* plans anyway), trying to take care of each other in the fucked up circumstances that bind them together.

"Do you... want to watch a movie?" he asks abruptly, his eyes darting up to her from where he leans on the countertop, fidgeting with the spoon in his bowl of softening ice cream.

She nods once, flexes her bottom lip as she straightens up, disturbing her lower back from its resting place against the cutlery drawer. "Yeah."

It's nice to have a father whose quality time with her doesn't involve bloodshed.

"Any suggestions?"

"Ginger Snaps?" It's Violet's favourite and she's seen it before but it's a good movie. Plus, it's fitting given that she's on her period.

Will might like it – the worst he can do is tune it out, go fishing in the imaginary stream he carries with him. She tries not to think too hard on that either, how it's a trauma response; things get too heavy and he has to escape it, ground himself in the water.

Will sets his laptop on the coffee table as they arrange themselves on the little sofa. He'd bought it after she chose the paint colour for her room – *I'm not rattling around here by myself anymore,* he'd said by way of explanation when she saw it and gave him a curious look. *I want the house to feel more like home.* He was too scared to say *your home*, but she heard it clear enough.

"Can I..?" She eyes him, wiggling closer.

"Yeah." Will stretches out an arm, quietly delighted, allowing her to lay her head against his shoulder, breathing in the smell of his aftershave.

"Thanks, Dad." she whispers and Will's fingers still in her hair for a second, overwhelmed by love.

Everything is fine for about an hour and twenty minutes – they're warm, safe and comfortable, curled up under a blanket together with the dogs littered around the room.

Everything is fine until the pixelated Fitzgerald mom on Will's laptop screen tells Brigitte that she can burn the house down and they can start a new life together, *just us girls* . Suddenly there's a gaping Mom-shaped hole in Abigail's chest and she's sobbing into Will's red plaid shirt.

"Hey, what's wrong? Abigail, honey, what's wrong?"

"I miss my mom." she whimpers, slightly hysterical. Mucus clogs her throat. She can't breathe and it reminds her a little too much of her carotid blood spurting through Will's fingers.

Will holds her, rocks her, strokes her hair.

"I didn't- We-" she chokes on her own spit, swallowing thickly. She's sure her nails are catching him through his shirt but he doesn't seem to mind.

"We weren't close, I di-didn't spend enough time with her. I was so focused on being a daddy's girl that I never did anything with my mom and now she's gone." Half the words are so high pitched through her strained throat they make her ears ring. All she can see is her mom, reduced to a sour bloodstain on the concrete of the front porch.

Will strokes her hair, shaking his head gently. "You couldn't have known, Abigail."

"I shouldn't have had to know!" she sobs and now she's furious with herself for every second she spent with her mom in the next room over. "I should have gone hiking with her more often, I should have made her coffee when she came home from work! I should have been a better daughter!"

"Your mom knew you loved her."

For a second, Abigail considers (and gets dangerously close to) screaming at him, throwing his empathy in his face. Between him and Hannibal, it's their fault she's an orphan. Instead she draws a shuddering breath, and lets herself go limp in his arms.

"I love you guys and you know that, and I feel supported but- I just- sometimes I wish I could go back before any of this happened."

Will nods, chin on her shoulder as he rubs her back. "I know, darlin', I know."

In her grief, she wonders if he means that for her, or for him – a single man keeping to himself, without her and the mess she brings with her.

Eventually, she disentangles, freckled cheeks tight and plasticky where tears have dried. Will's long lashes are glistening in the dancing light from the movie still playing – they're missing the denouement – and she fights the urge to unravel again.

"I'm gonna let the dogs out." Abigail says hoarsely, grabbing her phone from the coffee table and stepping out into the chill of the night.

The dogs, a mishmash of strays, follow after her – the bigger ones bound down the steps, sturdy and heavy while the little ones skitter across the grass.

Abigail crumples onto the porch step, wood cold through the fabric of her pyjama bottoms, and watches over them like G-d, watches them sniff the grass and cock their legs against the tree and chase each other.

She debates calling Hannibal but then she pictures him with the phone against his ear – just as it was when he called her dad, who'd hung up and split open her mom's throat like an apple bursting with rot.

She texts Alana. She doesn't know where else to turn.

Sorry for the late text, just wanted to thank you for being so good to me. I'm sorry I pushed you away at first, but I really appreciate all your help Dr Bloom.

No sooner has she hit send than her phone rings, vibration startling in her palm.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Abigail." Alana's voice is too gentle, as though Abigail is so fragile she might shatter. She *almost* hates it. "Are you alright?"

"Yeah, yeah, I'm fine." She tries to sound convincing, smiling though Alana isn't there to see it, but the sniffling gives her away.

"Abigail." Alana coaxes, firm but compassionate. "What's wrong?"

"Just hormonal… I was watching a movie with Will and then I started missing my mom. Ended up crying on him for twenty minutes." She huffs a laugh, wet and breathy.

"It got me thinking that I didn't spend enough time with my mom while she was here and you're the closest thing I have now... I just thought I'd let you know that I appreciate you." She can hear her own voice cracking and trembling pathetically, tears stinging her eyes again.

"So, thank you for not giving up on me even when I was awkward, and thank you for bringing me your CDs while I was in the hospital, and for not getting mad when Hannibal made breakfast for dinner."

Alana clicks her tongue in understanding. "Oh, honey, of course. I'm always here for you, Abigail. If you ever need me any time of the day or night, you just give me a call. Ok?"

Abigail nods for an invisible audience. "Yeah. Thank you." She can almost feel Doctor Bloom, warm and safe and maternal, embracing her through the phone; can nearly smell the perfume on the cobalt fabric of her coat. Tears sting in her sinuses again and she sucks in a frosty breath.

"Period?" Alana asks after a moment of silence.

"Yeah." Abigail admits, wrapping her arm around her middle and shrinking away from the cold air.

"I know." Abigail can see her sympathetic pout. "I swear it was nothing to do with me and my brothers were just extra annoying for five days out of a month."

Abigail laughs, small but genuine.

"Is Will taking care of you ok?"

"Yeah, he got me pads and painkillers and ice cream. I'm fine, Doctor Bloom."

"You're in good hands, then. Get plenty of sleep and I'll see you on Wednesday, ok?"

"See you then." She prepares for their scattered goodbyes but Alana isn't finished.

"And Abigail... since I guess I'm kind of like an aunt to you now, you can call me Alana."

Abigail huffs a soft laugh, feeling her chest warm as she slots into a new family, despite the exit wound left by the originals. "Ok. Thank you, Doc- Alana."

"Goodnight, honey."

"Night."

She sits on the step a few moments longer to let the dogs finish their business for the night. There's too much cloud cover to stargaze – though Will's house is usually best for it, away from the bustle and light pollution of Baltimore – but she doesn't want to go in yet.

When she eventually heads back inside, Will is waiting sheepishly. "You alright?"

She nods with her red-rimmed eyes closed, drained. She doesn't have the energy to speak, which is just as well because anything she says will reduce her to tears again.

"I paused the movie for you, if you want to finish it." he says softly.

She nods again, letting him stretch across and press play before settling back down with her head on his chest.

When the credits start rolling, he stretches his arms out with a yawn. He places his hand back down on her ribs but it's not quite lined up with the fading heat of where it used to be, and she shivers.

"What did you think?"

"I, uh, didn't *not* like it. It was an insight, interesting characters, lotta blood."

"Not exactly the most accurate depiction of teenagers." Abigail huffs a laugh under his chin and he agrees.

"What about your mom?" Abigail asks softly, bold as ever, and Will stiffens under her cheek.

"Never knew her. She died when I was too little to remember anything about her. Cancer."

Oh.

"We managed, my old man and me. We got by." he nods, mostly to reassure himself against the tears stinging his sinuses, chin resting on the top of her head.

Then, quietly, as though he's never voiced this to anyone, "My daddy didn't like to talk about her much. I imagine it was too painful, but…" he draws in a long breath then sighs it out, voice strained. "I resent him for that. All I know is her name."

Abigail squeezes him tighter, lets him stroke her hair like one of the dogs – unexpectedly, it feels comforting instead of demeaning.

She realises this is the most vulnerable he's ever been with her, the most he's ever said about his past. He'd be a nightmare of a client in therapy, she thinks – getting anything out of him is like pulling teeth. She wonders how Hannibal manages, then realises they both love and trust each other enough for Will to take off his armour completely.

Once his breathing settles under her ear, she asks "Where did you grow up?"

"New Orleans, and, uh, Biloxi. Mississippi."

"You should take me there." she says absently as he winds a strand of her hair between his fingers – Liebling, her mom always called that for no real reason, just a word she thought was nonsense as a kid but it had stuck, even after she cut her hair short. Abigail remembers laying on the couch just like this with her mom when she was little, out of bed with a tummy ache – she remembers when she found out liebling means darling.

Will lets out a short laugh. "Wouldn't want to go back there. Nothing worth going back for."

"Not home anymore?" She tilts her chin to look up at him.

"If it ever was." he chuckles, studying the corner of the room where the piano sits with an avoidant intensity.

"You deserve a home." Abigail says so softly it knocks the air out of his lungs, pulls his eyes down to her.

Blinking rapidly, his brow dips, caught off guard by her gentleness; the intimacy of a statement as fragile as glass as it leaves her dry lips.

"I have a home." Eyes shining, he adjusts his grip around her, returns his chin to her forehead with a kiss and whispers, "I have a home."

He means Hannibal and the dogs, not the teal walls of the living room with his bed standing guard in the corner. He means *her*.

*

At some point, Abigail falls asleep, snoring slightly where her nose is squished against his chest. He doesn't want to wake her to send her to bed so he just lets her doze, warm and solid against him.

Later, Hannibal texts to see how their night is going and Will responds with a picture of the two of them curled up – Abigail sleeping soundly under his chin, her features peaceful, his eyes dark and drowsy in the soft glow of the lamplight.

Fifty two miles away, Hannibal, beaming over the rim of his glass of rosé, sets it as his phone's lock screen.

*

Will wakes up on the floor, Abigail's slender hands like fishhooks, like mounting antlers under his armpits as she tries to haul him onto the bed.

"You're heavier than I thought." she complains as the daze begins to fade and he clambers to his feet. "Always had my dad to help me with carcasses."

He's touched that she'd try to carry him to bed but also, with a stab of distress, certain that she helped her father carry those pale dead girls into the cabin.

"Human or animal?" he asks before he can stop himself and she freezes briefly, a deer in the headlights.

"I helped him tuck Elise back into bed." she says softly and he's not sure if it's guilt in her voice, or residual fear. Maybe one day Garrett Jacob Hobbs will stop haunting them – either of them.

"Goodnight." Abigail says, taking small cautious steps towards the door; backing away from a predator, a hunter. Will finds that he can't blame her – you spend so long twisted into an uncomfortable shape in order to survive and find that muscle memory and psychological trauma never quite let you fully unfurl to how you used to be.

"Sleep well." he nods, sinking onto the bed with a groan of a man whose joints feel far older than thirty-five.

This standing down of sorts seems to put Abigail at ease, her slender shoulders unspooling. She pauses in the doorway, the lamplight twinkling in her eyes like fireflies in the muggy Louisiana air many summers ago. "Will?"

"Hm?"

"Thank you." she says firmly, as though she physically cannot express the depth of her gratitude in two spindly little words. He understands though – Will always understands.

He nods again, accepting the praise with a minimal amount of awkwardness. He's learning to be better at letting people appreciate him, because Hannibal and his love are an unstoppable force, and Will, despite his instability, is an immovable object – he's loved, whether he feels worthy or not.

And when Will offers her a gentle smile and says "Any time." they both know how sincerely he means it.

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